



# St Bernard's RC Primary School, Bolton

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 105230  
**Local Authority** Bolton  
**Inspection number** 287167  
**Inspection dates** 13–14 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Peter Jones

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Wendover Drive
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Ladybridge, Bolton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Lancashire BL3 4RX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 652147
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	113	<b>Fax number</b>	-
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Clare Doodson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 February 2001		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This is a small primary school serving a community of varied social and economic backgrounds. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low, and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school holds the Investors in People, Healthy Schools and ActiveMark awards.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St Bernard's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils' personal development and well-being, underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos, are good. Pupils enjoy school, as shown by the excellent attendance and the large numbers who take advantage of the many opportunities provided in sport and music. Pupils behave well and have a positive attitude towards their studies. There is a spirit of cooperation and friendliness amongst all members of the school community. One parent wrote about the school's 'amazing ability to make the children feel secure, happy and confident from the beginning'. The school enjoys overwhelming support from the vast majority of its parents and carers and has worked hard to successfully build links to involve them in school life.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory due to a recent successful programme to strengthen this area. Consequently, after some fluctuation, achievement and standards are improving. Results recovered strongly in recent national test results and pupils now reach above average standards and make satisfactory progress by the age of 11. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The youngest pupils enjoy their activities and have great fun in their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of good teaching and the support they receive from the skilled and sensitive teaching assistants. However, staff do not always ensure that all pupils are aware of their progress and give them effective guidance on how they may improve their work, and this hinders progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and with the governing body has been particularly effective in bringing about recent improvements. However, not all leaders have the necessary expertise to implement the plans for development. The senior management team's short-term strategic planning is good but there is no longer-term plan in place. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils are fully aware of how they are performing and what they need to do to improve their standards.
- Ensure that all staff set their pupils focused and challenging targets based on accurate analysis and evaluation of standards and achievement.
- Strengthen the school's long-term strategic planning and ensure that management has the skills required to carry it out effectively.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with above average levels of ability and make good progress in the Reception class due to skilful teaching. Since the previous inspection, standards and progress have fluctuated. However, this is now improving and standards are now

above average and achievement satisfactory by the end of Year 6. This is largely a result of effective action by the school that has tackled the weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning. The school's strategy of teaching discrete year groups and its identification of writing and problem solving as whole-school priorities have resulted in rapid improvements in these areas too. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the extra support they receive from the teaching assistants. The school is improving its systems for assessment and setting targets but these do not yet ensure that all pupils are set appropriate targets and make adequate progress towards them.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The school operates as a happy, orderly and inclusive learning community. The quality of pupils' personal development and well-being is better than the school's judgement. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in the enthusiasm they bring to their work and their excellent attendance. They are thoughtful for the needs of others. There are well-developed sporting links with local associations and high schools that provide pupils with opportunities to experience a wide range of activities. This has a positive impact on their self-esteem and confidence and their development of healthy lifestyles. The school council gives pupils good opportunities to influence decision making and their views are taken seriously. They are eager for more responsibility!

There is a growing awareness of, and involvement in, ecological issues amongst pupils. Pupils understand about healthy lifestyles and how to avoid the risks that threaten them. The school's Catholic ethos provides very good spiritual development and the school's personal, social and health education programme ensures that social and emotional development is good. There are good cultural opportunities in music and the arts, but pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to gain knowledge and experience of the multicultural society around them.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school with some good and outstanding teaching observed during the inspection. This has been the result of a concentrated and highly effective programme aimed at bringing about improvement which has been enthusiastically embraced by staff at all levels. The teaching of literacy and numeracy, and opportunities for collaboration and teamwork in lessons, combine effectively to prepare the pupils adequately for the future beyond the school. The youngest children are confident, feel secure in their surroundings and learn happily. They respond to the skilful teaching they receive from a dedicated team of staff and volunteers. The tracking of pupil progress, although in place, is not consistently developed throughout the school, so that it lacks clarity and rigour.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The school is beginning to increase the variety of its curriculum. A good example is the very successful Enrichment Week where all pupils hugely enjoy working with writers, artists, performers and sports people to improve their writing and problem solving skills. This has led to weekly 'creative afternoons' with the accent on learning through enjoyment and exploration. This has a positive impact on pupils' personal development as well as their overall achievement. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to learn to play musical instruments and to experience the performing arts. The school's provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved considerably since the last inspection, although older pupils would enjoy more opportunities to use ICT in other subjects and activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The school provides a safe and welcoming environment for learning, underpinned by its Catholic ethos where all children are known and valued. Vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs are provided with very good support. The school enjoys a growing reputation for the quality of its care and provision for these pupils. There are appropriate health and safety procedures. Child protection procedures are in place and in line with local and national guidelines. Pupils have respect for the adults in school and are confident in their support. Parents and carers value the school and are happy with the care provided. Academic guidance, such as the marking of pupils' work, does not always identify clearly what it is that the pupils need to do next to improve and this hinders their progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The dedicated headteacher provides good leadership. She brings a high level of skill and innovation to the challenge of school improvement. All staff agree that morale has improved dramatically in recent years. There is a tangible sense of pride and a commitment to working together which is key to raising standards and achievement for all pupils. Monitoring systems are rigorous and have led to improvements, for example, in the recent national test results. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. However, there is a lack of long-term planning to ensure sustained improvement. Professional development opportunities, developed with the local authority, are good and are having a positive impact on improving teaching and learning. The governing body provides good support and its members are becoming increasingly involved in school life. They have very good understanding of the issues facing the school and have been proactive in planning improvements and in carrying out their role as critical friends. As a result, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.



## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for being so friendly and for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my time with you, especially talking to you and finding out about all the interesting things that are happening in your school.

What I liked most about your school:

- you like coming to school and everyone gets along very well together
- your school council does a great deal for you and the school
- teachers and classroom assistants work hard to help you to learn
- your behaviour is good and you work hard
- the school keeps you safe and happy
- I know that you enjoy the extra-curricular and sports and music activities.

What I have asked the school to do now:

- I would like your teachers to give you more helpful comments when they mark your work to help you improve
- I have asked your teachers to check what you do in lessons more often and set challenging targets for you to improve your work even more
- I would like your teachers and governors to plan carefully together to make your school even better in the future.

I appreciated talking to you and watching you learn. Well done. You should be proud of yourselves and your school. I wish you well for the future.